

Report of the Work Team on Recognition of the Credentials and Skills of Foreign-Trained Individuals

**Submitted to Mrs. Lise Thériault,
Minister of Immigration
and Cultural Communities**

November 2005





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This report was prepared by the Work Team on recognition of the credentials and skills of foreign-trained individuals (*Équipe de travail sur la reconnaissance des diplômes et des compétences des personnes formées à l'étranger*), with support from the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, the Office des professions du Québec, and the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles. Assistance was also provided by Emploi-Québec, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. It was produced by the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles.

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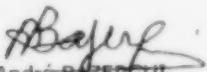
Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles
Direction des affaires publiques et des communications
Édifice Gérald-Godin
360, rue McGill, bureau 2.09
Montréal (Québec) H2Y 2E9
Telephone: (514) 873-8624, poste 20205
Website: www.micc.gouv.qc.ca

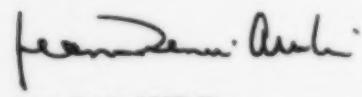
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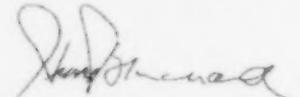
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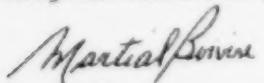
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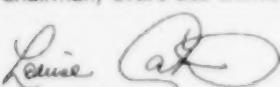
We are pleased to submit the report of the Work Team on recognition of the credentials and skills of foreign-trained individuals (*Équipe de travail sur la reconnaissance des diplômes et des compétences des personnes formées à l'étranger*). We thank you for the confidence you showed by appointing us to the team and hope that our findings will enrich your thinking and guide your actions.


André BAZERGUE
Work Team Chair


Jean-Denis ASSELIN
Director General, Cégep du Vieux Montréal

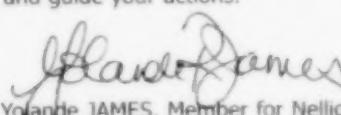

Pierre W. BLANCHARD
Assistant Secretary and Director of Medical Education Division,
Collège des médecins du Québec

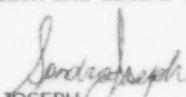

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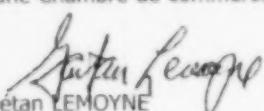

Louise CANTIN
Secretary General, Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec


Johanne DESROCHERS
Chief Executive Officer,
Association des ingénieurs-conseils du Québec

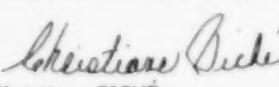

André GARIÉPY
Director General,
Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec


Yolande JAMES, Member for Nelligan and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities

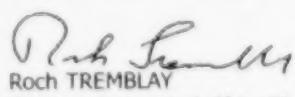

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Jeune Chambre de commerce haïtienne


Gaétan LEMOYNE
President, Office des professions du Québec


Pierre MOREAU
President, Université du Québec


Christiane PICHE
Vice Rector, Academic and Students Affairs,
Université Laval


Maryse RINPRET-RAYNOR
Provost and Vice Rector, Academic Affairs,
Université de Montréal


Roch TREMBLAY
Director General, Collège Ahuntsic

Ms. Lise Thériault
Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities
Government of Québec

Madam Minister:

It is my pleasure to submit the report of the Work Team on recognition of the credentials and skills of foreign-trained individuals, which was created by government order on December 21, 2004.

The members of our Work Team were united by one conviction: the skills of foreign-trained immigrants must be fairly valued and recognized. The sense of urgency we feel about this cannot be overstated. Indeed, over the last several years, the government has been called to action by many people impatient to see an end to the difficulties related to the recognition of prior learning of foreign-trained individuals. To address them, the government notably created the Task Force on access to regulated trades and professions (*Groupe de travail sur l'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés*), followed by our Work Team.

The hurdles are by now well known, and it is time to move on from discussing the issues to implementing concrete measures. This will come at a cost. Indeed, Québec cannot promote additional immigration without investing the resources needed to allow immigrants to contribute fully to its growth, drawing on their entire complement of skills.

Our Work Team therefore urges the government to support the efforts of parties concerned with prior learning recognition, who seek to facilitate the access of foreign-trained individuals to regulated professions. Support must take the form of a message from the highest authorities to all departments, public agencies, and partners, asking for their full participation in efforts to adapt practices and efficiently integrate immigrants.

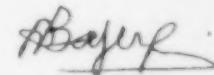
It is also important to finance efforts to produce information tools, provide integration support services to immigrants, create prior learning recognition tools, as well as design and offer bridge training. We are talking about an investment that is both modest in scope and highly cost-effective. The skills of immigrants able to quickly find work in their field are enormously beneficial to society as a whole.

Major strides have been made as a result of our work, which we are convinced will have a significant impact on foreign-trained individuals. Thus, we propose, among other things, legal and regulatory amendments, in particular to the Professional Code, to give professional orders more flexibility in issuing permits designed to facilitate the professional integration of foreign-trained individuals. We also recommend amending the Professional Code in order for the review of decisions rendered by professional orders with regard to diploma and training equivalence, to be carried out by an entity distinct from the initial decision maker. In addition, parties involved in prior learning recognition will have to examine their laws, regulations, and practices to make sure they contain no systemic obstacles that make it unnecessarily difficult to obtain a permit. Swift adoption of these measures will sharply reduce the time required to secure a permit.

However, the deadlines for submitting our report prevented us from working out our proposed solutions in the detail we would have liked, especially with regard to bridge training. Creation of our Work Team, however, led to excellent collaboration between professional orders, teaching institutions, and government. Now on a solid footing, it is one of our major accomplishments. We, indeed, are recommending the continuation of this collaboration, through the appointment of a permanent multipartite committee.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the urgency of taking action to promote the professional integration of immigrants, a basic prerequisite to their harmonious integration into Québec society. It is also a key to the future prosperity of this society. Only by mobilizing all stakeholders and investing the financial resources needed to achieve this critical objective will Québec profit richly from the experience and skills of the immigrants it takes in.

Yours truly,



Work Team Chair
André Bazergui, Eng.

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Introduction

Québec has identified immigration as a major tool for meeting its development challenges. Québec's immigration plan for 2006 well illustrates the importance of immigration, calling for Québec to take in between 46,200 and 48,200 immigrants in 2006. The number was 37,500 in 2001.

Immigration is currently the primary source of growth for Québec's labour force and will account for all work force expansion within 10 years¹. The Québec government has, indeed, made the professional integration of immigrants a priority. In addition, 56.9% of the immigrants age 15 and older admitted into Québec between 1999 and 2003 had 14 or more years of schooling, compared to 36.7%² of Québec's population as a whole. Immigration, as a result, will become "a major draw, even an increasingly differentiating one, in persuading companies to produce their goods and services in Québec."³

Québec, therefore, is facing new demands, both in terms of prior learning recognition for the purpose of obtaining permits from professional orders, and of education, especially continuing education and bridge training.

Immigrants must be able to hold jobs consistent with their skills and expertise if they are to contribute fully to Québec's future development. Yet, too often, the professional integration of immigrants is not as swift and successful as one might hope. This situation sometimes stems from the difficulty, experienced by foreign-trained individuals, to obtain adequate information, to assert their skills and have them recognized by regulatory bodies of trades and professions, and to obtain the training they need to close the gap between the skills they have and those required to practice their profession in Québec.

THE TASK FORCE ON ACCESS TO REGULATED TRADES AND PROFESSIONS

To address these concerns, the Minister of Relations with the Citizens and Immigration announced in March 2004 the creation of the Task Force on access to regulated trades and professions (*Groupe de travail sur l'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés*). Made up of members of the National Assembly and chaired by Ms. Diane Legault, MNA for Champlain and then-Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Relations with the Citizens and Immigration, the Task Force was formed in the wake of the implementation of the *Shared Values, Common Interest* Action Plan. The mandate of the Parliamentarians Task Force was to outline the difficulties involved in recognizing competencies and training, and to propose solutions to eliminate some of these problems. Ms. Legault was assisted in her task by Yvan Bordeleau, MNA for Acadie, Laurent Lessard, MNA for Frontenac, and Éric R. Mercier, MNA for Charlesbourg.

More specifically, the Task Force was charged with:

- Setting out the problems associated with recognizing the skills and academic credentials of foreign-trained individuals
- Identifying concrete, innovative solutions for facilitating access to regulated trades and professions

¹ Groupe de travail sur l'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés, *Les personnes immigrantes et l'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés* (Immigrants and access to regulated trades and professions), Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles, February 2005, p. 8.

² Ibid.

³ Équipe de travail sur le maintien de l'accès à des services éducatifs de qualité, *Rapport sur l'accès à l'éducation. L'éducation, l'avenir du Québec* (Report on access to education. Education, Québec's future), Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, October 2005, p. 21.

To fulfill its mandate, the Task Force solicited input from the public and met with stakeholders concerned with the issue in the fall of 2004. Ms. Legault submitted the report of the Task Force to the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities, Lise Thériault, on February 23, 2005, and presented it to Premier Jean Charest on March 1. The report, entitled *Les personnes immigrantes formées à l'étranger et l'accès aux professions et métiers réglementés* (Foreign-trained immigrants and access to regulated trades and professions), was made public at a press conference held March 18, 2005. The report identifies the problems associated with recognizing skills and academic credentials and proposes solutions for eliminating some of them⁴.

THE WORK TEAM ON RECOGNITION OF THE CREDENTIALS AND SKILLS OF FOREIGN-TRAINED INDIVIDUALS

The issue of recognizing the skills of foreign-trained professionals was also discussed at the Forum des générations held in October 2004. Forum participants agreed at the time on the need to take more vigorous action. Accordingly, the government created a work team in December 2004 to explore the various aspects of prior learning recognition with regard to the access by foreign-trained immigrants to professions regulated by professional orders.

The Mandate of the Work Team

Based on the recommendations of the Parliamentarians Task Force, the Work Team on recognition of the credentials and skills of foreign-trained individuals was given the following mandate:

- Identify the main barriers to faster recognition of the academic credentials and the skills of foreign-trained individuals
- Determine the actions and measures essential to eliminate those barriers
- Get all those involved to commit to the swift implementation of concrete and structuring measures that address the problem in a significant way

Anticipated outcomes:

- The definition of the concrete and structuring measures to be implemented in order to eliminate the difficulties experienced by foreign-trained individuals attempting to gain faster access to professions regulated by professional orders
- The determination of the means necessary to achieve that goal, especially the laws, regulations, and practices requiring modification, if any

Composition of the Work Team

The Work Team consisted of the following members:

- Mr. André Bazergui, Work Team Chair, Innovitech partner
- Ms. Yolande James, MNA for Nelligan and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities
- Mr. Jean-Denis Asselin, Director General, Cégep du Vieux Montréal
- Dr. Pierre W. Blanchard, Assistant Secretary and Director of Medical Education Division, Collège des médecins du Québec
- Mr. Martial Boivin, Chairman, Ordre des chimistes du Québec
- Ms. Louise Cantin, Secretary General, Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec
- Ms. Johanne Desrochers, Chief Executive Officer, Association des ingénieurs-conseils du Québec

⁴ This document can be consulted on the website of Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles at www.micc.gouv.qc.ca.

- Mr. André Gariépy, Esq., Director General, Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec
- Ms. Sandra Joseph, outgoing President and Secretary, Jeune Chambre de commerce haïtienne
- Mr. Gaétan Lemoyne, Esq., President, Office des professions du Québec
- Mr. Pierre Moreau, President, Université du Québec
- Ms. Christiane Piché, Vice Rector, Academic and Students Affairs, Université Laval
- Ms. Maryse Rinfret-Raynor, Provost and Vice Rector, Academic Affairs, Université de Montréal
- Mr. Roch Tremblay, Director General, Collège Ahuntsic

Mr. Khiem Dao, Executive Director of the Hôpital Sainte-Justine, notified the Work Team of his withdrawal on June 2, 2005, due to professional obligations that prevented him from attending meetings.

Ms. Diane Legault, who, at the time of her appointment, was Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Relations with the Citizens and Immigration, was replaced following the February 2005 cabinet reshuffle by Ms. Yolande James, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities.

The Work Team was supported by the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles, and the Office des professions du Québec. Assistance was also provided by Emploi-Québec, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, and representatives of professional orders.

Work Process

The Work Team on recognition of the credentials and skills of foreign-trained individuals held its first meeting on February 4, 2005. It was attended by Minister of Relations with the Citizens and Immigration, Michelle Courchesne.

The second meeting took place March 18, 2005, with Lise Thériault, Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities, sitting in. During the meeting Premier Jean Charest greeted Work Team members and reminded them of the importance of their work. He also assured Ms. Thériault of his support in implementing the recommendations submitted to him. The premier relayed the same message to the chairs and many members of the 45 professional orders attending the 40th anniversary dinner of the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec on May 27, 2005. On September 12, the premier again stressed the great importance of the issue, at a press conference publicizing the launch of the Task Force on the full participation of black communities in Québec society.

The Work Team subsequently met on April 8 and 29, May 20, September 9, October 21, and November 18, 2005.

Three working subcommittees were also created.

- The first one was assigned to study possible means of implementing the recommendations of the Parliamentarians Task Force on access to information. This subcommittee of representatives from the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec and the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles held two meetings. A representative from a professional order also participated in one of them.
- The second subcommittee reviewed the recommendations related to the recognition of prior learning. It consisted of representatives from the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, the Office des professions du Québec, the Ordre des chimistes du Québec, and the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles. Representatives from other organizations joined it for the study of some recommendations. Thus, representatives from other professional orders, from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, Emploi-Québec, and from college and university teaching institutions sat in from time to time on the sessions of this subcommittee, which held nine meetings.

- The third working subcommittee was instructed to review the recommendations concerning bridge training. It consisted of representatives from the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles, and college and university teaching institutions. The third subcommittee held three meetings and was joined by representatives from Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and Emploi-Québec.

The Work Team submitted a progress report to the Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities in June 2005.

THE WORK TEAM REPORT

In order to determine the actions and measures needed to lift the difficulties of gaining access to professions regulated by professional orders, the Work Team considered all the recommendations of the Parliamentarians Task Force. Since the problems and issues of access to regulated professions were already described in the Task Force report, the Work Team has not presented them again. Its report focuses rather on the ways to implement measures that will achieve the objectives set by the Task Force.

The Work Team report therefore borrows much of its general structure from the Task Force report, which contains sections on access to information, prior learning recognition, and bridge training. In addition, the recommendations of the Task Force are appended.

Since several Task Force recommendations are already in the process of being implemented, our report details progress made, if any.

Access to information

Prospective and resident immigrants seeking to practice a profession governed by a professional order must be provided adequate, timely information on the requirements for doing so. Relevant, accurate information will help them negotiate the process of gaining admission to their profession. Progress in this area has been made in the last several years, but other measures and actions need to be undertaken or implemented more quickly.

THE SELECTION PROCESS FOR PROSPECTIVE IMMIGRANTS

The difficulties of gaining access to professions governed by professional orders must be considered at every stage of the immigration process, especially early on. It is critical that the criteria for selecting prospective immigrants be more consistent with the situation prevailing in the host country.

During review of the Regulation respecting the selection of foreign nationals, the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles took steps to make sure that the difficulties of gaining access to regulated professions be better taken into account in the skilled workers' selection grid. Indeed, the new proposed selection grid will award points to applicants with a "diploma issued by a Québec educational institution, in Québec or abroad, [a] diploma or training determined by a government regulation as giving access to the authorization to practise a profession or trade regulated in Québec as well as [a] diploma or training recognized as equivalent by the regulatory body concerned."

In addition, the draft regulation paid close attention to the vocabulary used in the selection grid. Some applicants in the economic immigration category are selected on the basis of "high-demand professions" or "preferred training" criteria. The use of such language could lull candidates into thinking that finding a job consistent with their skills will be easy. The proposed selection grid deletes those phrases.

The Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles will also need to modify the declarations signed by individuals seeking employment in fields regulated by professional orders, to include more specific information on the requirements and stipulations for practicing their profession. The professional orders concerned will be asked to check and approve the forms. It is important that the information in the declarations be realistic. Lastly, the MICC will have to give a signed copy of the document to all such applicants.

ACCURATE, RELEVANT INFORMATION

While it is the responsibility of immigrants to learn about the prerequisites for practicing regulated professions, the government and its partners have a duty to make that information available. It is vitally important to disseminate easy-to-access, understandable information that is as complete, relevant, and tailored to the needs of immigrants as possible. Special care must be taken to pass this information on to prospective immigrants, to help them make informed decisions about immigration and encourage them to begin the process of qualifying to practice in their field as soon as possible.

Some measures have already been implemented. The MICC communication plan stresses the importance of adequately informing prospective immigrants about the process of professional integration, without minimizing the difficulties they may encounter. The MICC is also reviewing foreign information sessions promoting immigration to Québec, information sessions preparing immigrants for their arrival in Québec, and all promotional and informational documents it produces, to make sure that the information provided is realistic. For example, the new tool *Learning about Québec – Guide for my successful integration* outlines the steps for obtaining formal recognition of prior learning.

The general and specific fact sheets about regulated professions prepared jointly by the MICC, professional orders, and the Office des professions du Québec provide information on the legislative and regulatory framework governing the professions. But a broader focus is needed. Immigrants and prospective immigrants must also have access to information about the following:

- The work environment, including the profession's legal and regulatory framework and a description of the economic sector to which it belongs
- The occupational outlook, to provide better information to potential immigrants looking for a salaried position and those interested in setting themselves up in private practice

The additional information will be provided by partners responsible for supplying more detailed expertise. For instance, where information on occupational outlooks is concerned, the MICC will have to add hyperlinks from its site, and especially from documents dealing with access to professions governed by professional orders, to the site of Emploi-Québec, which has extensive information on the job market via its online Labour Market Information service.

Various organizations analyze occupational outlooks. For example, Emploi-Québec's Labour Market Information service offers detailed data on the status of the job market. The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux assess the job outlooks in their specific fields. And the MICC maintains a list of the occupations in demand for immigrant selection purposes. Their assessments sometimes diverge. It is important to pull together these organizations' findings, to avoid providing contradictory information.

With regard to the description of the economic sector, the MICC site must also include hyperlinks to the site of the Ministère du Développement économique, de l'Innovation et de l'Exportation⁵. The new links must replace the fact sheets on aerospace, biotechnologies, and information technologies available on the MICC website.

Implementation of this measure is already in progress: a link to the Emploi-Québec site has been added to the general fact sheet *The practice of a profession governed by a professional order* and to certain specific fact sheets on the same topic. This link will be added to other specific fact sheets as they are updated. Links to sites offering information on occupational outlooks and industrial sectors will also have to be added to the MICC site at its next update.

Whenever the MICC site links to the sites of other departments, the information found there must be tailored to the needs of the immigrant clientele. For example, Emploi-Québec's website should spell out the fact that the job outlooks it describes are valid for workers trained in Québec and for foreign-trained workers who meet the requirements of professional orders. Its website should also have a link to pertinent information at the site of the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec and the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles.

In addition, individuals who have not yet learned French should have access to information in other languages about admission requirements into professions governed by professional orders. Although it is not feasible to translate and update this information in a wide variety of foreign languages, it should at least exist in English and Spanish. The Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec already offers information in English and Spanish on its website. The same measure is being implemented by the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles. The general fact sheet *The practice of a profession governed by a professional order* is already available in English and Spanish and *Practising the profession of engineer* is available in English. The translation of other fact sheets has also begun. It is a priority and must be fast-tracked.

⁵ This site has complete information on the following industrial sectors: aerospace, chemicals, trade, construction, the environment, clothing, advanced materials, metallurgy, plastics processing, health care and biotechnologies, business services, information and communication technologies, textiles, tourism, and ground and maritime transport. The information is translated into English.

General information on the existence of regulated professions should also be disseminated in languages other than French, English, and Spanish, based on priority needs. The Work Team suggests that the following messages be translated into other languages:

- "In Québec, certain trades and professions are regulated. You need a permit to practice them. Find out more about these!"
- "Under the Charter of the French Language, individuals interested in practicing an occupation regulated by a professional order must demonstrate a knowledge of the French language appropriate to the exercise of their profession."

The languages into which the above messages will be translated will depend on the size of recruitment pools and workforce needs.

Recommendations

To improve the relevance and quality of the information provided to prospective and resident immigrants, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Modify the declarations the MICC requires prospective immigrants to sign, so that they spell out the prerequisites for practicing a profession governed by a professional order, and issue immigrants a signed copy of the declaration
- Link the MICC site to websites offering information on occupational outlooks and various economic sectors, and make sure that the information meets the needs of immigrants
- Coordinate the work of the organizations that assess occupational outlooks
- Fast-track the translation into English and Spanish of individual fact sheets on regulated professions that are currently available in French on the MICC website
- Produce general information in other languages on the existence of regulated professions
- Continue the implementation of actions already initiated to this effect

Responsible parties

The implementation of these measures will be assumed by the MICC in collaboration with the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, professional orders, and Emploi-Québec.

Twenty-five specific fact sheets will have to be translated into English and Spanish over the next fiscal year. The others will have to be during the following fiscal year.

INTEGRATION SUPPORT SERVICES FOR IMMIGRANTS

Integration support services for immigrants are indispensable for promoting their social and professional integration. In terms of access to regulated professions, integration support ensures that the information provided to prospective immigrants is thoroughly understood, especially by those who are not yet proficient in French. It also helps steer prospective immigrants to appropriate resources and services. It familiarizes them with the cultural elements specific to Québec's job market and the methods of assessment used in North America. The MICC and its partners already provide integration support to immigrants, notably by helping them obtain recognition of their prior learning.

The MICC has an information service about regulated trades and professions. Prospective permit holders who have questions about professions governed by professional orders can obtain answers from this service. Among other things, this service supplies information about the regulatory context in Québec, the process to obtain the right to practice a regulated trade or profession, and the documents and fees required. It can also help candidates prepare their applications for admission to a regulatory body and study the options open to them at every step of the admission process.

The MICC recently produced the integration support guide *Learning about Québec*, which contains information about regulated professions. It is supplied to all prospective immigrants abroad and new immigrants to Québec, to facilitate their integration.

Community organizations that help new immigrants also provide integration support to professionals applying to practice a regulated profession. It is essential that they be adequately staffed and acquire expertise in the matter. In addition, community organizations and the MICC must continue to offer complementary services.

Immigrants must be given information about employment opportunities in fields related to regulated professions but not necessarily requiring a permit to practice. Information sessions could also be offered by the MICC or its partners to introduce immigrants to employment options in certain business sectors. The MICC has already successfully implemented initiatives of this kind. However, it is important to avoid encouraging immigrants to seek employment in "grey areas." They should not be prompted to perform work that encroaches on fields regulated by professional orders.

Integration support requires substantial resources and the availability of enough competent staff to help candidates with their applications and procedures. Organizations that help new immigrants must therefore be adequately funded, and the MICC must be allocated the resources it needs to carry out this mandate.

Because the number of immigrants admitted to Québec has been rising steadily over the last few years, integration support resources must keep pace.

Recommendations

To improve integration support services for foreign-trained prospective and resident immigrants seeking to practice a profession governed by a professional order, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Train specialized support resources in community organizations that help new immigrants
- Make sure that the MICC and community organizations that help new immigrants offer integration support services that are complementary and adequate to meet the needs of the growing number of immigrants admitted each year to Québec
- Hold information sessions to present employment opportunities in areas related to regulated professions

Responsible parties

The Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles is responsible for implementing the above measures, in collaboration with its partner organizations and professional orders.

Recognition of prior learning

The prior learning recognition process must be as fair, transparent, and efficient as possible, while retaining the stringency necessary to ensure the protection of the public. Improvements to this process must take into account two distinct realities with which professional orders are currently grappling. On the one hand, professional orders are being asked to adopt higher standards to facilitate the Canadian and North American mobility of their members, even though most of them will practice only in Québec. On the other hand, they are being urged to make admission processes more flexible, to facilitate the access of foreign-trained individuals to regulated professions, without lowering the standards designed to protect the public.

AGREEMENTS ON PRIOR LEARNING RECOGNITION WITH FOREIGN INSTITUTIONS

Under the terms of the Professional Code, professional orders are authorized to sign agreements with foreign regulatory bodies or teaching institutions to facilitate equivalence recognition. Agreements of this kind are already in place, one example being the mutual recognition agreements with other jurisdictions.

Similar to the agreements signed between the Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec and international institutions and bodies, other types of collaboration could be established, depending on economic requirements and expressed needs. Whenever relevant to do so, professional orders will have to initiate or continue proceedings to this end.

REGULATIONS PERTAINING TO PRIOR LEARNING RECOGNITION

The Office des professions du Québec has surveyed professional order regulations on the matter of prior learning recognition. Currently, 40 of 45 professional orders have regulations governing diploma equivalence standards and 33 have regulations on training equivalence standards. Of those without such regulations, several have set forth standards in the transitional provisions of a law or decree. Others are simply unable to adopt such regulations in the absence of a diploma conferring eligibility for a permit under government regulations. Still others have begun steps aimed at adopting such standards.

To sum up, 44 of 45 professional orders either have a diploma equivalence regulation or have taken steps to adopt one. Only one order has made no formal attempt to do so. In addition, six of the 12 professional orders without a training equivalence regulation have adopted drafts and another three are currently working on one.

The Office des professions du Québec has asked the three orders that have not taken steps to adopt a diploma and training equivalence regulation to set a timetable for doing so. Since almost all orders have a regulation governing equivalence standards, it is safe to conclude that the lack of one is no longer a major obstacle to recognizing the prior learning of foreign-trained immigrants.

COMPARATIVE EVALUATION FOR STUDIES DONE OUTSIDE QUÉBEC

In the past, doubts have been expressed about the usefulness of the *Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors du Québec* (Comparative evaluation for studies done outside Québec) produced by the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles. The MICC has therefore continued to review it, so that it better addresses the needs of regulatory bodies, employers, and teaching institutions.

In the fall of 2004, an initial consultation of employers, teaching institutions, and regulatory bodies was held. A survey of immigrants was also conducted in March 2005. The initial findings for both will be available by the end of the year and changes will have to be made to the *Évaluation comparative* based on the results.

Recommendation

To provide an *Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors du Québec* (Comparative evaluation for studies done outside Québec) that better addresses real needs, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Revise the document based on the findings of the surveys already conducted among employers, teaching institutions, regulatory bodies, and immigrants

Responsible party

The MICC is responsible for implementing this action.

ASSESSING CANDIDATES ABROAD

A realistic, tailored approach must be favoured for evaluating applicants abroad. The assessment of applicants while still in their countries of origin may prove a realistic approach when important labour needs are confirmed by employers. With the support of Recrutement Santé Québec, this was the approach used in the health sector, to recruit nurses from France and speech therapists from Belgium.

We recommend targeting professions suited to this type of assessment and for which major labour shortages are being reported by employers. Countries with an immigration volume sufficient to make it a feasible option, should be targeted as well. The participation of major employers and of the health care, social services, and education networks would then be required.

This initiative must also be linked to some of the measures concerning the accessibility of information namely, the modification of some selection grid criteria and their weighting, and to those pertaining to access to bridge training.

Online self-assessment tools are another possible means of evaluating candidates abroad. These tools have the added advantage of allowing candidates to clearly understand the process and to realize that prior learning recognition is a shared responsibility. The Ordre des chimistes du Québec already has a self-assessment tool on line. Other professional orders are presently studying this avenue. Professional orders will have to assess the usefulness and feasibility of creating such online tools, based on the realities in their field and expressed needs. Adequate financial resources will have to be allocated to support professional orders that will assess applicants abroad.

The MICC already collaborates and will continue to work with professional orders on devising skills assessment tools through the program *Soutien à des projets pilotes afin de faciliter l'admission aux ordres professionnels* (Support for pilot projects facilitating admission to professional orders). It is essential that the program be adequately funded. Teaching institutions are also working on developing such tools.

Recommendations

To assess candidates while abroad, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Create assessment tools whenever useful and feasible, based on each profession's needs and realities in the field

Responsible parties

Professional orders will implement the measures, enlisting the expertise of teaching institutions and the support of the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles. Major employers and the health, social service, and education networks may, in some cases, be asked to collaborate in the implementation of this measure.

REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL ORDER PRACTICES

In terms of reviewing the laws, regulations, and practices of regulatory bodies to see whether they involve systemic barriers to the entry of foreign-trained individuals into regulated trades and professions, it is up to the professional orders to examine their own practices. Where practices need to be improved, professional orders will have to bring forth solutions congruent with the realities in their field. They possess the expertise to successfully complete this task. The Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec will have to play a major role in implementing the measure, by providing coordination and by supporting professional orders.

Moreover, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec is currently drafting a document entitled *Principes et bonnes pratiques en matière de reconnaissance d'une équivalence de diplôme et de formation acquis hors du Québec* (Principles for the recognition of equivalence of credentials and training acquired outside Québec). It came about as part of its 2001 work plan and collaboration with the MICC.

The Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec will propose a framework for adoption by professional orders. It will set forth equivalence recognition principles and list administrative, methodological, and procedural best practices with regard to prior learning recognition. The document will draw on international principles in the field. It will also feature an analytical grid enabling professional orders to assess themselves and select indicators.

This approach will facilitate the gathering and dissemination of information for the purpose of monitoring initiatives in matters pertaining to the access to regulated professions. The Office des professions du Québec will issue guidelines as needed to harmonize the approaches taken by professional orders and correct shortcomings. If warranted, changes could be made to the practices of professional orders and to the laws and regulations governing them.

Each professional order will have to create an information management system to monitor decisions concerning the performance of their equivalence recognition mechanism. The Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec will oversee coordination of orders to make sure that they develop a standard approach and management system. The orders will present their results in this regard in their annual reports along with the steps they have taken to ease prior learning recognition. As we will see later, the Office des professions du Québec will make regulatory changes to require professional orders to include a new section in their annual reports on measures they have taken to facilitate prior learning recognition.

Recommendations

To ensure that prior learning recognition practices of professional orders do not involve barriers to the entry of foreign-trained individuals into regulated professions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Supply professional orders with the document *Principes et bonnes pratiques en matière de reconnaissance d'une équivalence de diplôme et de formation acquis hors du Québec* and the analytical grid
- Assess the practices of professional orders based on the above-mentioned document
- Issue guidelines as needed to standardize the approaches of professional orders or to correct specific shortcomings
- Modify, if necessary, the practices of professional orders or the laws or regulations governing them
- Present the steps taken following the assessment of practices

Responsible parties

The document entitled *Principes et bonnes pratiques en matière de reconnaissance d'une équivalence de diplôme et de formation acquis hors du Québec* will be written by the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec in collaboration with the professional orders.

The professional orders will carry out the assessment of practices. The measures taken by each professional order following this assessment will be presented in their annual reports for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

Professional orders will propose amendments to laws and regulations, if warranted, in collaboration with the Office des professions du Québec.

SUPPLEMENTAL ADMISSION TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The imposition of supplemental admission terms and conditions may be dictated by the necessity to verify the acquisition of specific knowledge or abilities, by the necessity, for a candidate seeking to practice a profession, to acquire or upgrade certain practical abilities or knowledge specific to such practice.

Additional requirements may include such things as writing an exam to verify or measure knowledge, performing an internship to learn or sharpen practical skills, or completing a course to acquire or upgrade knowledge, as needed.

Our study of regulations found some intertwining among additional conditions and their equivalences. Two different tests will often be considered equivalent, a course will be deemed equivalent to field work, and vice versa. In fact, tools for gauging and acquiring knowledge and abilities appear to be limited. Although more general equivalence standards may exist, they still require measurement, to guarantee the candidate's competence and, therefore, the safety of the public the professional order is committed to protecting.

Professional orders and the Office des professions du Québec must commit to encourage the widest possible adoption of equivalence standards. However, imposing a unilateral, universal standard would not be appropriate. A first problem arises when the equivalence of the additional condition takes the form of a theoretical or practical examination for the purpose of measuring knowledge. To an examination, it is possible to substitute success on an equivalent evaluation measuring the same parameters, such as a pan-Canadian test or one administered by a recognized foreign organization, when available. Barring that, the enforcement of the additional condition is the only way to evaluate what the government-approved regulations on additional terms and conditions require to measure.

A second problem arises when the additional condition pertains to the acquisition or enhancement of knowledge or abilities. In some cases, the knowledge or abilities in question are universal and may have been acquired in another country. However, some are more local in nature, such as knowledge and abilities related to the context of professional practice in Québec. These can only be learned through training or experience in Québec.

In short, it does not appear apposite to require the adoption of diploma and training equivalence standards for all supplemental admission terms and conditions. However, professional orders and the Office des professions du Québec must see to it that an equivalence standard exists whenever it appears that the knowledge or abilities could have been acquired by a means other than the additional condition, or measured adequately elsewhere. While doing so, they should carefully consider whether there is a real basis for each supplemental condition whenever a related regulation is submitted for approval to the government.

Recommendation

To prevent supplemental terms and conditions for admission into professional orders from acting as unnecessary barriers to the entry of foreign-trained individuals into regulated professions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Adopt an equivalence standard whenever it appears that the knowledge or abilities could have been validly acquired by a means other than the stipulated additional condition or term, or measured adequately elsewhere

Responsible parties

This measure will be implemented by the professional orders, with the collaboration of the Office des professions du Québec.

RECOGNITION OF WORK EXPERIENCE

The training equivalence recognition process must favour credit for relevant work experience. However, it would be difficult to adopt very precise assessment standards for doing so. It would require a specific methodology to be written into the regulation, an option that cannot be contemplated.

A variety of evolving methodologies are in use, several of which have no definite, simple, effective means for recognizing work experience. The methods have various purposes and are designed to measure different skills. In addition, some of them are unnecessarily burdensome or leave a great deal up to the judgment of the evaluator. Since methodologies vary enormously, it would be inappropriate to require professional orders to limit themselves indefinitely to one, universally applied method. Likewise, regulating exactly which skills are needed for the applicant's experience to be recognized would limit the professional order's freedom to choose its methods. A general standard would therefore be more appropriate.

An inventory conducted by the Office des professions has found that 26 professional orders have regulations specifically citing relevant work experience as a factor in assessing training. It is one aspect among others. There is no reason to favour work experience recognition to the detriment of other criteria, thereby penalizing candidates whose academic credentials, for example, are more impressive than their experience. The point is to include all factors that can be used to assess training equivalence, including work experience. All current and future regulations will have to include work experience as an assessment factor.

Moreover, it will be up to the professional orders, with the support of the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, to devise methods and tools suitable for evaluating work experience.

Recommendations

To fairly take into account the relevant work experience of applicants seeking recognition of prior learning from professional orders, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Mandate the inclusion of work experience as a training assessment factor in all cases, phasing in the new requirement as new regulations are adopted or existing ones updated
- Design and make available work experience assessment tools

Responsible parties

The regulations will be adopted by professional orders and submitted to the Office des professions du Québec as part of the regular regulation adoption process.

The professional orders will assume responsibility for designing work experience assessment tools. They will be assisted by teaching institutions, in accordance with their expertise, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, and the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles.

RESTRICTED PERMITS

As professional mobility grows, professional orders favour flexibility in the issuance of permits. The Office des professions du Québec is preparing amendments to the Professional Code to facilitate mobility by issuing permits based on proof of other permits. This would allow a professional order, by regulation and contingent upon a prior agreement to that effect, to determine the organizations from other provinces or states whose members it would automatically admit, subject to the order's enrollment stipulations.

The professional system has been considering the idea of granting restricted permits for some time. Restricted permits could allow an applicant who does not meet all the requirements for a permit, but who possesses certain skills, to practice on a limited basis under conditions and restrictions determined by the order, while gaining missing knowledge and skills. The Collège des médecins du Québec, the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec, and the Ordre des orthophonistes et audiologues du Québec already issue restricted permits. They offer many advantages, including a faster entry of immigrants into the job market and the opportunity to earn the financial means to pursue the studies required.

In addition, restricted permits of unlimited duration would allow holders to indefinitely pursue professional activities for which the professional orders deems them qualified. This is an attractive option in some respects. Examples include certain categories of foreign professionals who should be able to practice some of their skills in Québec without having to qualify again in order to practice the whole gamut of skills possessed by order members. Specialized nurses or physicians, as well as jurists who wish to offer their services in foreign law, are some examples. Other professional orders could be interested in issuing restricted permits, based on needs and the situation in the field.

Although the advantages of this option—the ability to meet specific market needs or offset shortages, for example—seem inarguable, an “à la carte” issuance of permanent restricted permits based strictly on the candidate’s personal situation raises additional questions. They pertain particularly, to the orders’ and employers’ potential to manage the possible individualization of the permits to practice. Such drawbacks can, however, be avoided if the guidelines for issuing restricted permits are based on the needs in the fields rather than on the sole personal characteristics of the candidates. General guidelines determining eligibility for a permanent restricted permit must therefore be included in the regulations of professional orders.

The Office des professions du Québec will solicit input from professional orders and some partners concerning restricted permits, to determine eligible professional categories and the designation of such permits. Upon completion of this consultation, the Professional Code will be amended to authorize professional orders to issue temporary restricted permits to prospective professionals, subject to

conditions and procedures of their own choosing. The amendments will also authorize professional orders to grant permanent restricted permits, subject to regulation. The regulation must stipulate the reasons for issuing restricted permits, the activities Ipermits holders are authorized to pursue, the conditions or restrictions on the exercise of permit holder activities, and the conditions and procedures for issuing the permit.

In addition, it should be stressed that the issuance of restricted permits will be subject to the provisions of the Charter of the French Language. In other words, neither temporary nor permanent restricted permits will remain valid beyond the period stipulated for passing the examination required by the Charter of the French Language, should the permit holder fail the test.

Although our analysis is primarily concerned with the access of immigrants to regulated professions, the possible solutions being considered cannot overlook the question of fairness to individuals trained in Québec.

Recommendations

To authorize professional orders to issue new types of permits allowing the faster entry of applicants into regulated professions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Solicit the input of professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel that represents them, and concerned partners regarding the issuance of permits based on proof of other permits, temporary restricted permits, and permanent restricted permits
- Amend the Professional Code accordingly

Responsible parties

The Office des professions du Québec will carry out the consultation and amend the Professional Code, in collaboration with the professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel that represents them, and partners with an interest in the matter.

REVIEW OF DIPLOMA AND TRAINING EQUIVALENCE DECISIONS

Candidates who believe that their application for diploma or training equivalence was wrongly denied currently have no means of appeal to a distinct entity. Although professional orders have review mechanisms, most of them consist of having the order's Bureau review its own decision. As a result, doubts have been raised about the usefulness of the process, with some people fearing that the merits of the original decision are not seriously reconsidered.

Mediation is not an option in determining whether an applicant meets the minimum standards required to protect the public. Assessment of the skills needed to practice a profession is not open to negotiation. The analysis must be conducted with all the thoroughness public protection demands.

However, having an entity, other than the initial decision-maker, conduct the review would provide applicants with an independent review mechanism. It is entirely legitimate for a distinct entity to act as adjudicator. Although, from a legal standpoint, there is nothing improper about a decision-making body reexamining its own decision, the professional system would be more transparent, efficient, and credible if a separate entity handled reviews. That is also the conclusion of the document *Principes et bonnes pratiques en matière de reconnaissance d'une équivalence de diplôme et de formation acquis hors du Québec* by the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, which provides an overview of international decision review principles.

The Office des professions and other organizations in the professional system must study ways to modify the Professional Code to allow a distinct entity to review decisions rendered by the initial decision-maker. However, the review body should remain a part of the professional order. Given their mandate to protect the public and admit professional candidates, professional orders are the ones with the expertise to make these decisions.

Various review options are possible. One model could be the procedure used when a syndic decides against filing a complaint with the disciplinary committee of a professional order. In such cases, Québec's Professional Code prescribes a review of the syndic's decision by a distinct entity, specifically a committee of order members and a representative of the public. The committee may recommend filing a complaint with the disciplinary committee to the order's Bureau. Because the committee has a consultative, not a decision-making, role, this model would be inappropriate if the initial decision was made by the Bureau. In such cases, the committee would make a recommendation to the original decision-maker, which would do nothing to allay the above-mentioned fears.

Another possibility would be to create a review committee with decision-making authority. If the committee decided to recognize an equivalence, the Bureau would have no choice but to issue the permit or notify the candidate that he or she was eligible to move forward in meeting any other outstanding conditions required for a permit.

Lastly, a committee could be established to determine equivalence, with review falling to the Bureau or to a separate division of the equivalence committee. This approach closely approximates the suggestion of a work group formed in the context of updating the professional system, which proposed allowing the Bureau to create a committee to rule on individual cases.

Recommendations

To provide for the independent review of diploma and training equivalence decisions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Solicit the input of professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel that represents them, and partners concerned about the best way to create a review entity distinct from the initial decision-maker
- Amend the Professional Code to authorize orders to create such an entity

Responsible parties

This recommendation will be implemented by the Office des professions du Québec, in collaboration with professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel that represents them, and partners concerned.

Access to bridge training

The access of foreign-trained individuals to the bridge training prescribed by professional orders is critically important, since without it they cannot master the skills they need to practice their profession in Québec. According to data compiled by the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, almost half of the foreign-trained candidates applying for diploma or training equivalence from professional orders are granted partial equivalence and must undergo bridge training⁶. Therefore, bridge training must be made sufficiently available to enable them to complete the requirements within a reasonable period of time. This issue, discussed by the members of several government and multipartite committees, is closely tied to the implementation of many government policies and strategies⁷.

To truly make education a fundamental value in Québec, and enable qualified foreign-trained workers to contribute to the growth of our economy, the Québec government must adequately support initiatives to facilitate access to bridge training. It will be the task of the permanent multipartite committee whose creation we will recommend later in our report not only to continue our work, but to ensure the coherence of the efforts by the various parties involved in this matter.

However, the Work Team's deadlines for submitting its report precluded a review of the issue as thorough as it would have wished. The permanent multipartite committee will therefore have to take the necessary measures to ensure that, this time, discussions lead to concrete and structuring solutions.

PROVIDING MORE BRIDGE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport has taken steps to increase the number of users of distance and online education and create mechanisms for quick access to job-related upgrading. It has also begun the review of its pedagogical organization to increase the supply of public part-time courses.

Teaching institutions and professional orders also need to pay more attention to the issue of required training. Better collaboration should lead to more widely available and accessible training, especially for limited enrollment programs.

Distance learning is another way to expand bridge training opportunities. Some universities and professional orders have recently created innovative tools. An example is distance courses on CD-ROM, online, or networks, dealing with Québec legislation and context of professional practice. Such training tools can speed the qualification process for immigrants seeking to practice a regulated profession. Distance courses could be used by prospective immigrants living abroad and interested in practicing a regulated profession. They will also provide access to training to individuals who have settled outside of Québec's major urban areas, thus bolstering the efforts of the MICC to promote a more geographically diversified distribution of immigrants.

Academic assistance is another valuable service for immigrants enrolled in bridge training classes. Emploi Québec and some of its partners have already implemented measures designed to complement services already being offered by teaching institutions and directed at candidates training to practice nursing or engineering. Such efforts must continue and be adequately funded, while respecting the autonomy of foreign-trained workers.

⁶ Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, *Mémoire à la Commission parlementaire de la culture relativement à la planification des niveaux d'immigration 2005-2007*, February 2004, p. 8-9.

⁷ These policies and strategies include the Government Policy and Action Plan for Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training, the *Rapport sur l'accès à l'éducation* (Report on access to education) of the *Équipe de travail sur le maintien de l'accès à des services éducatifs de qualité* (Work Team on maintaining access to quality educational services), the Government employment plan entitled *L'emploi : un passeport pour l'avenir*, the labour skills qualification and development strategy now being drafted, the strategy for bringing in new health care and social service workers, also being drafted, and the new Government economic development strategy, *L'avantage québécois*.

In addition, job shadowing and mentoring are useful in preparing for professional examinations, especially for candidates unfamiliar with Québec's context of professional practice or required to undergo hands-on appraisals of their skills. This type of instruction is especially difficult to arrange in the health care field, which is already short of resources to supervise trainees completing their regular clinical assignments. Despite the challenges, access to job shadowing and mentoring opportunities must be broadened.

BRIDGE TRAINING AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport recently expressed its willingness to fund all of the qualifying trainings prescribed to a candidate by a professional order, be they full or part time, or part of a regular academic or continuing education program. However, this new financing rule has been open to interpretation for some time.

The Work Team asked the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport to clarify its planned changes and to circulate the information in a way that would be clearly understood by the concerned teaching institutions. The department responded with the following commitment: "Effective with the 2005-2006 academic year, funding will be provided for trainings related to the practice of a profession and required by any professional order as a condition for individuals who already possess a qualification, to be granted or to recover the right to practice in Québec." The Work Team is delighted with this major step forward, since application of the new financing rule will facilitate access to bridge training for foreign-trained immigrants.

The department also told the Work Team that "in order to address the specific issue of students requiring tailored training, but whose numbers are too small to form a group warranting sufficient funding, the department will examine with colleges the possibility of implementing experimental financing options." The Work Team believes that this promising measure should also be implemented without delay.

BRIDGE TRAINING AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL

A lack of human, financial, and material resources at university institutions already limits the supply of places available in the regular educational program. In many cases the number of places is so restricted that admitting new students to just a few classes reduces the number of slots available in the regular course of study. Microprograms tailored to the needs of foreign-trained immigrants must be created, whenever pertinent and when large and homogenous enough groups can be assembled. Microprograms could be designed jointly by several institutions offering the regular program.

Another problem that especially affects university-level bridge training is the difficulty of enrolling in practicum courses, such as clinics or lab classes, in the limited enrollment programs of the health care field. Access to field work or internships as part of regular university studies or to fulfill an additional condition is easier in the sectors with well-developed, well-organized networks.

The upcoming repeal of the refundable tax credit for workplace internships that the Québec government grants to private-sector companies that host a trainee raises many concerns. Its abolishment could negatively impact the number of private-sector internships offered. This example well illustrates the lack of coherence of governmental action in regard of training.

Recommendations

To ensure adequate bridge training opportunities for foreign-trained applicants seeking entry into a regulated profession, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Create coordination mechanisms to strengthen the ties between professional orders and college and university teaching institutions
- Implement and publicize the new college education funding rule on training required by professional orders
- Implement experimental funding to support the creation of customized bridge training courses where the number of students involved is not large enough to form a cohort
- Keep the refundable tax credit for private-sector companies offering workplace internships

Responsible parties

College and university teaching institutions, professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, the Conférence des recteurs et principaux des universités du Québec, the Fédération des cégeps, and the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport will be responsible for implementing these measures.

The permanent multipartite committee will be responsible for contacting the appropriate government departments about the tax credit measure.

LEARNING THE FRENCH VOCABULARY OF THE REGULATED PROFESSION

Sufficient and adequate knowledge of the French language is of great importance to ensure that foreign-trained candidates meet with success when they apply for a permit from a professional order, seek professional integration or integration into Québec society as a whole.

The Conseil supérieur de la langue française recently published a brief entitled *Le français, langue normale et habituelle du travail*. It contained the following recommendation: "[...] the Conseil recommends that language preparatory courses for the admission test be implemented by the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec in collaboration with the Office québécois de la langue française for those orders that do not already have them".⁸

However, it is not the responsibility of the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec to organize such language courses. The MICC, which is partly accountable for doing so, must continue implementing the measures of the *Shared Values, Common Interests* action plan, which deals with francization. The MICC, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, professional orders, teaching institutions, and the Office québécois de la langue française must strengthen their collaboration to ensure that French courses tailored to professional practices are available.

Indeed, it is important to offer training tailored to the needs of immigrants working to gain recognition of prior learning. More tools must also be created to help teach the technical vocabulary of regulated professions for each sector of activity, including health care, law, administration, sciences, and engineering. To this end, the expertise of the Office québécois de la langue française, of teaching institutions, and professional orders will have to be drawn upon.

Moreover, in evaluating French language knowledge, it is important to make sure that the examinations of Office québécois de la langue française adequately assess whether candidates possess a knowledge of French appropriate to the practice of their profession. This will require stepping up collaboration between the Office québécois de la langue française, professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel that represents them, and the MICC.

⁸ Conseil supérieur de la langue française, *Le français, langue normale et habituelle au travail*, 2005, p. 25.

The issue of the duplicate assessment of French language proficiency was also raised. Taking the Office québécois de la langue française examination is mandatory in some cases for obtaining a regular permit to practice. In addition, one professional order has its own French proficiency assessment tool, used during its equivalence determination process. Since the equivalence of this exam is not recognized by the Office, some applicants are required to undergo two separate assessments aimed at similar goals. The Office should recognize the equivalence of French proficiency examinations administered by professional orders, if any, to avoid duplicate assessments of profession-specific French language knowledge.

Recommendations

To improve and better assess the French language proficiency of immigrants seeking recognition of prior knowledge in order to practice a regulated profession, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Offer specialized French courses tailored to their needs
- Improve assessment tools
- Recognize that the French proficiency examinations of professional orders, if any, are equivalent to the examination of the Office québécois de la langue française

Responsible parties

Creating and offering specialized French courses tailored to the needs of professional permit candidates is the responsibility of the MICC, working with professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, teaching institutions, and the Office québécois de la langue française.

The measure respecting the assessment of French language proficiency is the responsibility of the Office québécois de la langue française, in collaboration with the orders.

Financial aid for individuals seeking formal recognition of prior learning

The costs incurred by foreign-trained individuals seeking formal recognition of prior learning or bridge training are often substantial. Many immigrants are unable to afford them.

Our Work Team would like to have spent more time reflecting on the financial support provided to foreign-trained immigrants seeking prior learning recognition or bridge training required by a professional order. Unfortunately, the deadline for the submission of our report did not allow it. The advisability of the following should be considered:

- Approach employers, financial institutions, or private foundations to sign agreements for some type of financial aid to immigrants involved in a prior learning recognition process or seeking bridge training
- Offer subsidy and support programs for the same purpose
- Offer tax incentives to promote private-sector input in expanding bridge training opportunities
- Adapt student financial aid programs to better address the needs of individuals undergoing bridge training at the college or university level

The Work Team believes, nevertheless, that the allocation of financial aid must be fair to individuals trained in Québec who are also applying for admission to a professional order. Lastly, beneficiaries must not interpret financial aid awards as a guarantee that they will secure recognition of their prior learning.

Recommendation

To implement recurrent and permanent financial support measures for foreign-trained immigrants seeking recognition of prior learning from a professional order, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Complete a more thorough analysis of the types of financial support that could be offered and implement the measures selected

Responsible party

This review will be conducted by the permanent multipartite committee whose creation we will recommend later in our report.

Support for organizations involved in prior learning recognition

It can prove difficult for regulatory bodies to ascertain the prior learning of foreign-trained individuals, given the diversity of training around the world, the fast-changing nature of some professions, and the growing number of immigrants admitted to Québec. Various types of joint initiatives to support the organizations involved in prior learning recognition and interested in upgrading their practices in the matter, were outlined earlier.

The Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles is already collaborating and will continue to collaborate with professional orders through a financial aid program called *Soutien à des projets pilotes afin de faciliter l'admission aux ordres professionnels* (Support for Pilot Projects to Facilitate Admission to Professional Orders). The program has made it possible to develop skills assessment tools, training documents, workshops, and study groups. It is important to ensure the permanence of this program, which is already proving its worth, and step up financing for it.

With regard to the pooling of expertise between the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles, regulatory bodies, and teaching institutions, the MICC and the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec signed a memorandum of understanding last January to promote the exchange of factual information and expertise with respect to the assessment of diplomas awarded outside Québec. The Conférence des recteurs et principaux des universités du Québec, the MICC, and the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec should also begin working together to share expertise in prior learning recognition.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, in conjunction with other departments and representatives of secondary and college teaching institutions, is studying proposals by various institutions to establish ways of integrating and regionally organizing skills and prior learning recognition services. Their proposals should lead to the creation of full-fledged centers of expertise in each region in Québec. This will surely further the goal of promoting expertise sharing and the mutual recognition of assessments performed by each institution.

Continued implementation of these measures will depend on adequate financing of the organizations by the Québec government. The federal government may be a potential source of funding. The Work Team supports the Québec government's efforts to obtain its fair share from the federal government of the \$320 million allocated to the Internationally Trained Workers Initiative (ITWI), announced last April 25. It is essential that Québec be able to channel the funds it could receive to the institutions and mechanisms it put in place.

Recommendation

To bolster support for the organizations involved in prior learning recognition, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Allocate sufficient funding for a strategic approach to facilitating the access of foreign-trained individuals to regulated professions

Responsible parties

The Québec government must provide funding. The permanent multipartite committee will be responsible for quantifying needs.

Coordination of prior learning recognition initiatives

Prior learning recognition is a shared responsibility, and all those concerned by the issue should mobilize to facilitate access by foreign-trained workers to professions governed by professional orders. Coordination is vital for coherent action.

Although various coordination mechanisms have been adopted over the years to facilitate the recognition of prior learning, they did not focus in a comprehensive, permanent way on the issue of access to regulated professions. During its investigations, the Work Team came to understand the importance of continuous action in the areas of information, prior learning recognition, and bridge training, and of coherent action in areas that directly or indirectly affect access to professions governed by professional orders.

It is also important to continue discussions with parties concerned by the issue of access to professions governed by professional orders. The constructive momentum generated by the Work Team must not be allowed to falter when its work is over.

Creating a permanent committee of parties concerned with the issue of access to regulated professions would ensure the coherence of actions in this area. This permanent multipartite committee would report to the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles.

It should include the deputy ministers in charge of the MICC, the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, and Emploi-Québec, senior executives from the Office des professions du Québec and the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, and representatives from associations of college and university teaching institutions. In addition, representatives from other organizations could be added to the committee, depending on the nature of the topics discussed.

For the committee to fully play its role, it is essential that the actions it recommends to the government be adequately funded and that the MICC, as its prime mover and supporter, has the financing it needs to shoulder its responsibilities for the integration of immigrants.

Recommendations

To coordinate the actions aimed at easing the access of foreign-trained immigrants to professions governed by professional orders, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Create a permanent multipartite committee of parties concerned by this issue
- Reassess the mandates of existing joint action committees, to avoid duplication with the new committee

Responsible parties

MICC will be called upon to create, provide leadership and support this committee.

Professional integration after securing a permit to practice

There is no point in granting an immigrant the right to practice a regulated profession if he is subsequently unable to find a job in his field of competence. As the shortage of skilled workers grows, departments concerned with economic issues, in concert with the Commission des partenaires du marché du travail and the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles, must be able to promote the diversity, expertise, and skills of foreign-trained professionals. The business and export development value of hiring immigrants is obvious.

Occupational immersion programs teach immigrants the cultural ins and outs of the Québec workplace and give them their first experience working in Canada. In the past, some projects have successfully achieved their goal of facilitating the professional integration of foreign-trained immigrants.

The Work Team is pleased that the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles has decided to create the *Programme d'aide à l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités visibles en emploi* (PRIIME – Job integration aid program for immigrants and visible minorities). However, eligibility for PRIIME is restricted to immigrants who have been permanent residents for less than two years or to members of a visible minority group.

Although we understand the rationale behind the eligibility criteria, the Work Team nonetheless deplores the fact that immigrants who have been permanent residents for more than two years are ineligible for the program. Indeed, immigrants seeking formal recognition of their prior learning are often at a disadvantage given the time it takes to secure a permit to practice a regulated profession. It is therefore quite possible for a new professional order member to be ineligible for the PRIIME program. A five-year limit would be more reasonable.

The fact that only small and medium-size companies are eligible for the subsidy is another drawback of PRIIME. The government should also provide incentives for large companies to hire foreign-trained individuals. In addition, prospective health care and social service professionals can, for all intents and purposes, only find internships in the public sector. The government must therefore implement measures apt to increase the number of occupational immersion placements available to immigrants qualified to hold positions in the health and social services network.

In summary, the Work Team believes that measures to promote the professional integration of immigrants must better reflect the reality experienced by those interested in practicing professions governed by a professional order.

Recommendations

To facilitate the professional integration of foreign-trained individuals once they are granted the right to practice a regulated profession, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Broaden eligibility criteria for the *Programme d'aide à l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités visibles en emploi* (PRIIME)
- Bring about measures to increase opportunities for job-related immersion training for immigrants in the health care and social services sector

Responsible parties

The MICC, in collaboration with Emploi-Québec, will be responsible for proposing revisions to the eligibility criteria of the *Programme d'aide à l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités visibles en emploi* (PRIIME).

The permanent multipartite committee must propose measures to increase opportunities for job-related immersion training for immigrants in the health care and social services sector.

Monitoring prior learning recognition initiatives

As mentioned earlier, each professional order will be invited to set up an equivalence information management system to monitor the decisions and performance of the mechanism for recognizing diploma and training equivalence, notably for the benefit of professionals trained abroad. Results must specify the number of applications for equivalence recognition received, granted, partially granted, or declined. To this end, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec will coordinate orders efforts to develop a standard management approach and system.

In addition, the updated Regulation respecting standards for the preparation and content of annual reports of professional corporations will call for orders to add a new section to their annual reports noting the number of applications received, accepted, or declined. The new section will also report the number of requests from foreign-trained individuals for recognition of diploma or training equivalence or equivalence with respect to supplemental admission terms and conditions. Professional orders will also be required to specify in this new section the actions they took to facilitate prior learning recognition.

In addition, the MICC must create a system for gathering information to assess progress in facilitating access to professions governed by professional orders. Although the department already reports on its initiatives in this area in its annual report, more is needed. It must examine the scope and effects of its actions.

It will be up to the permanent multipartite committee to monitor implementation of the Work Team's recommendations.

Recommendations

To monitor initiatives promoting access to regulated professions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Create an equivalence information management system, specifying the number of applications for equivalence recognition received, granted, partially granted, and declined
- Amend the Regulation respecting standards for the preparation and content of annual reports of professional corporations to require a new section containing data on prior learning recognition and the actions taken to facilitate it
- Assess the scope and effects of the MICC initiatives to promote access to regulated occupations
- Assign the permanent multipartite committee the task of monitoring Work Team recommendations

Responsible parties

Professional orders will be responsible for creating an equivalence information management system.

The Office des professions du Québec will take charge of updating the Regulation respecting standards for the preparation and content of annual reports of professional corporations.

The Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles will be responsible for assessing the scope and effects of its actions regarding access to regulated professions.

The permanent multipartite committee will monitor implementation of the Work Team's recommendations.

Conclusion

There is no question that Québec society has a responsibility to integrate foreign-trained immigrants. We must see to it that these individuals contribute fully to the growth of Québec society. Most of them have been selected by Québec on the basis of traits that would theoretically predispose them to be easily integrated into the job market. However, that is not always the case. It is therefore up to the Québec government to fully assume its role and ensure that all those in Québec society responsible for turning immigrants into full-fledged Québécois work diligently toward this goal.

The Work Team's findings have helped mobilize professional orders and other partners with an interest in the outcome. Granted, improved coordination of initiatives and changes in the practices of the parties involved will lead to greater effectiveness and more efficient support of immigrants seeking formal recognition of their prior learning. But that is not enough. The government must agree to invest in Québec's future, a future in which Quebecers from other parts of the world will be full participants. Obviously, mobilizing to achieve this goal will come at a cost. However, it is important to quantify needs and to follow up quickly on the Work Team's recommendation regarding strategic funding of measures to facilitate immigrant access to regulated professions. The Work Team would have liked to quantify the investments required, but ran short of time.

During our investigations, each Work Team member was acutely aware of holding one piece of the puzzle for eliminating obstacles to prior learning recognition for foreign-trained immigrants seeking professional permits. But members also realized that we had to pool our efforts and that we could work together to achieve our goal. All agree that work must continue. We must focus on offering qualifying training, in keeping with the government's goal of better matching the selection of immigrants and the needs of the job market.

Since the publication of the Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration in 1990 and the signature of the Canada-Quebec Accord relating to immigration and the admission of temporary residents in 1991, Québec's initiatives to promote the integration of immigrants have often served as beacons for other governments. Learning from others' practices and from the assessment of its own efforts, the government must make sure that the solutions outlined in this report are put into practice, and that they bring about the elimination of the obstacles preventing immigrants from participating fully in Québec's development. Immigrants have a great deal to offer.

Summary of the Work Team's recommendations

1. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

1.1 To improve the relevance and quality of the information provided to prospective and resident immigrants, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Modify the declarations the MICC requires prospective immigrants to sign, so that they spell out the prerequisites for practicing a profession governed by a professional order, and issue immigrants a signed copy of the declaration
- Link the MICC site to websites offering information on occupational outlooks and various economic sectors, and make sure that the information meets the needs of immigrants
- Coordinate the work of the organizations that assess occupational outlooks
- Fast-track the translation into English and Spanish of individual fact sheets on regulated professions that are currently available in French on the MICC website
- Produce general information in other languages on the existence of regulated professions
- Continue the implementation of actions already initiated to this effect

Responsible parties

The implementation of these measures will be assumed by the MICC in collaboration with the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, professional orders, and Emploi-Québec.

Twenty-five specific fact sheets will have to be translated into English and Spanish over the next fiscal year. The others will have to be during the following fiscal year.

1.2 To improve integration support services for foreign-trained prospective and resident immigrants seeking to practice a profession governed by a professional order, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Train specialized support resources in community organizations that help new immigrants
- Make sure that the MICC and community organizations that help new immigrants offer integration support services that are complementary and adequate to meet the needs of the growing number of immigrants admitted each year to Québec
- Hold information sessions to present employment opportunities in areas related to regulated professions

Responsible parties

The Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles is responsible for implementing the above measures, in collaboration with its partner organizations and professional orders.

2. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

2.1 To provide an *Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors du Québec* (Comparative evaluation for studies done outside Québec) that better addresses real needs, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Revise the document based on the findings of the surveys already conducted among employers, teaching institutions, regulatory bodies, and immigrants

Responsible party

The MICC is responsible for implementing this action.

2.2 To assess candidates while abroad, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Create assessment tools whenever useful and feasible, based on each profession's needs and realities in the field

Responsible parties

Professional orders will implement the measures, enlisting the expertise of teaching institutions and the support of the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles. Major employers and the health, social service, and education networks may, in some cases, be asked to collaborate in the implementation of this measure.

2.3 To ensure that prior learning recognition practices of professional orders do not involve barriers to the entry of foreign-trained individuals into regulated professions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Supply professional orders with the document *Principes et bonnes pratiques en matière de reconnaissance d'une équivalence de diplôme et de formation acquis hors du Québec* and the analytical grid
- Assess the practices of professional orders based on the above-mentioned document
- Issue guidelines as needed to standardize the approaches of professional orders or to correct specific shortcomings
- Modify, if necessary, the practices of professional orders or the laws or regulations governing them
- Present the steps taken following the assessment of practices

Responsible parties

The document entitled *Principes et bonnes pratiques en matière de reconnaissance d'une équivalence de diplôme et de formation acquis hors du Québec* will be written by the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec in collaboration with the professional orders.

The professional orders will carry out the assessment of practices. The measures taken by each professional order following this assessment will be presented in their annual reports for the 2006-2007 fiscal year.

Professional orders will propose amendments to laws and regulations, if warranted, in collaboration with the Office des professions du Québec.

2.4 To prevent supplemental terms and conditions for admission into professional orders from acting as unnecessary barriers to the entry of foreign-trained individuals into regulated professions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Adopt an equivalence standard whenever it appears that the knowledge or abilities could have been validly acquired by a means other than the stipulated additional condition or term, or measured adequately elsewhere

Responsible parties

This measure will be implemented by the professional orders, with the collaboration of the Office des professions du Québec.

2.5 To fairly take into account the relevant work experience of applicants seeking recognition of prior learning from professional orders, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Mandate the inclusion of work experience as a training assessment factor in all cases, phasing in the new requirement as new regulations are adopted or existing ones updated
- Design and make available work experience assessment tools

Responsible parties

The regulations will be adopted by professional orders and submitted to the Office des professions du Québec as part of the regular regulation adoption process.

The professional orders will assume responsibility for designing work experience assessment tools. They will be assisted by teaching institutions, in accordance with their expertise, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, and the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles.

2.6 To authorize professional orders to issue new types of permits allowing the faster entry of applicants into regulated professions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Solicit the input of professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel that represents them, and concerned partners regarding the issuance of permits based on proof of other permits, temporary restricted permits, and permanent restricted permits
- Amend the Professional Code accordingly

Responsible parties

The Office des professions du Québec will carry out the consultation and amend the Professional Code, in collaboration with the professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel that represents them, and partners with an interest in the matter.

2.7 To provide for the independent review of diploma and training equivalence decisions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Solicit the input of professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel that represents them, and partners concerned about the best way to create a review entity distinct from the initial decision-maker
- Amend the Professional Code to authorize orders to create such an entity

Responsible parties

This recommendation will be implemented by the Office des professions du Québec, in collaboration with professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel that represents them, and partners concerned.

3. ACCESS TO BRIDGE TRAINING

3.1 To ensure adequate bridge training opportunities for foreign-trained applicants seeking entry into a regulated profession, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Create coordination mechanisms to strengthen the ties between professional orders and college and university teaching institutions
- Implement and publicize the new college education funding rule on training required by professional orders
- Implement experimental funding to support the creation of customized bridge training courses where the number of students involved is not large enough to form a cohort
- Keep the refundable tax credit for private-sector companies offering workplace internships

Responsible parties

College and university teaching institutions, professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, the Conférence des recteurs et principaux des universités du Québec, the Fédération des cégeps, and the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport will be responsible for implementing these measures.

The permanent multipartite committee will be responsible for contacting the appropriate government departments about the tax credit measure.

3.2 To improve and better assess the French language proficiency of immigrants seeking recognition of prior knowledge in order to practice a regulated profession, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Offer specialized French courses tailored to their needs
- Improve assessment tools
- Recognize that the French proficiency examinations of professional orders, if any, are equivalent to the examination of the Office québécois de la langue française

Responsible parties

Creating and offering specialized French courses tailored to the needs of professional permit candidates is the responsibility of the MICC, working with professional orders, the Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec, teaching institutions, and the Office québécois de la langue française.

The measure respecting the assessment of French language proficiency is the responsibility of the Office québécois de la langue française, in collaboration with the orders.

4. FINANCIAL AID FOR INDIVIDUALS SEEKING FORMAL RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

4.1 To implement recurrent and permanent financial support measures for foreign-trained immigrants seeking recognition of prior learning from a professional order, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Complete a more thorough analysis of the types of financial support that could be offered and implement the measures selected

Responsible party

This review will be conducted by the permanent multipartite committee whose creation we will recommend later in our report.

5. SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN PRIOR LEARNING RECOGNITION

5.1 To bolster support for the organizations involved in prior learning recognition, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Allocate sufficient funding for a strategic approach to facilitating the access of foreign-trained individuals to regulated professions

Responsible parties

The Québec government must provide funding. The permanent multipartite committee will be responsible for quantifying needs.

6. COORDINATION OF PRIOR LEARNING RECOGNITION INITIATIVES

6.1 To coordinate the actions aimed at easing the access of foreign-trained immigrants to professions governed by professional orders, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Create a permanent multipartite committee of parties concerned by this issue
- Reassess the mandates of existing joint action committees, to avoid duplication with the new committee

Responsible parties

MICC will be called upon to create, provide leadership and support this committee.

7. PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION AFTER SECURING A PERMIT TO PRACTICE

7.1 To facilitate the professional integration of foreign-trained individuals once they are granted the right to practice a regulated profession, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Broaden eligibility criteria for the Programme d'aide à l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités visibles en emploi (PRIIME)
- Bring about measures to increase opportunities for job-related immersion training for immigrants in the health care and social services sector.

Responsible parties

The MICC, in collaboration with Emploi-Québec, will be responsible for proposing revisions to the eligibility criteria of the *Programme d'aide à l'intégration des immigrants et des minorités visibles en emploi* (PRIIME).

The permanent multipartite committee must propose measures to increase opportunities for job-related immersion training for immigrants in the health care and social services sector.

8. MONITORING PRIOR LEARNING RECOGNITION INITIATIVES

8.1 To monitor initiatives promoting access to regulated professions, the Work Team recommends the following:

- Create an equivalence information management system, specifying the number of applications for equivalence recognition received, granted, partially granted, and declined
- Amend the Regulation respecting Standards for the Preparation and Content of Annual Reports of Professional Orders to require a new section containing data on prior learning recognition and the actions taken to facilitate it
- Assess the scope and effects of the MICC initiatives to promote access to regulated occupations
- Assign the permanent multipartite committee the task of monitoring Work Team recommendations

Responsible parties

Professional orders will be responsible for creating an equivalence information management system.

The Office des professions du Québec will take charge of updating the Regulation respecting standards for the preparation and content of annual reports of professional corporations.

The Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles will be responsible for assessing the scope and effects of its actions regarding access to regulated professions.

The permanent multipartite committee will monitor implementation of the Work Team's recommendations.

ANNEX

**Review of the recommendations of the
Task Force on access to regulated trades
and professions**

Review of the recommendations of the Task Force on access to regulated trades and professions

This section reviews the recommendations of the Task Force on access to regulated trades and professions, used by our Work Team as a basis for its own work. We referred to this Parliamentarians Task Force, chaired by Ms. Diane Legault, MNA for Champlain and at that time Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Relations with the Citizens and Immigration, in our introduction. Its mandate was to outline the difficulties involved in obtaining formal recognition for skills and training and to propose solutions to eliminate some of the problems. Ms. Legault was assisted in her tasks by Yvan Bordeleau, MNA for Acadie, Laurent Lessard, MNA for Frontenac, and Éric R. Mercier, MNA for Charlesbourg. The report was released on March 18, 2005⁹.

REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON ACCESS TO REGULATED TRADES AND PROFESSIONS

THE NEED FOR PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION

Strengthen the advisory role to the Government of Québec played by the Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles on matters pertaining to the integration of immigrants

Proposed action

- Establish protocols for the MICC to play an advisory role to the Government of Québec on the integration of immigrants

Elicit the involvement of all participants to promote the professional integration of immigrants

Proposed action

- Establish a permanent interdepartmental coordination committee bringing together deputy ministers concerned by the question of access to regulated trades and professions, and headed by the MICC. This committee's mandate would be to ensure coherence and continuity of government action on access to regulated trades and professions and follow up on the Groupe de travail recommendations chosen for implementation. Through this committee, the MICC could, among other things, play the advisory role mentioned in the above recommendation.

DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN OBTAINING THE AUTHORIZATION TO EXERCISE A REGULATED TRADE OR PROFESSION: ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Improve information on regulated trades and professions

Proposed action

- Provide easily accessible information on job prospects via the MICC website
- Translate into English and Spanish the information on regulated trades and professions circulated by the MICC, in particular the fact sheets on professions governed by professional orders
- Assess, on the basis of the greatest needs (by taking into account, for example, the importance of recruitment pools), whether general information on regulated trades and professions should be made available in languages other than French, English, and Spanish.
- Create information fact sheets for other regulated trades and professions

⁹ This document can be consulted on the MICC website at www.micc.gouv.qc.ca.

**Review of the recommendations of the Task Force
on access to regulated trades and professions**

- Make available information on possible employment venues in fields related to regulated trades and professions that would not necessarily require a permit to practice
- Promote the development of self-assessment tools designed to complement other available means of information

Assist candidates contemplating entering regulated trades and professions

Proposed action

- Offer candidates abroad personalized assistance by using online tools
- Broaden the mandate of the Information service on regulated professions to ensure the availability of its services abroad and for a greater number of regulated trades and professions

When promoting immigration and selecting independent candidates, consider the difficulties involved in gaining access to regulated trades and professions

Proposed action

- Ensure that the MICC's efforts at promoting immigration to Québec shed fair and realistic light on the difficulties and issues involved in obtaining access to regulated trades and professions
- Consider the requirements of regulatory bodies when selecting immigrants. These requirements could be considered at the training and experience assessment stage by amending certain criteria of the selection grid as well as their weighting
- Amend the declarations that the MICC has candidates sign with regard to certain regulated trades and professions so that they contain more precise information on the conditions for practising these trades and professions

**DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN OBTAINING THE AUTHORIZATION TO EXERCISE
A REGULATED TRADE OR PROFESSION: PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND
RECOGNITION**

Improve the prior learning assessment and recognition process

Proposed action

- When assessment tools allow and the candidate pool is sufficient, study the possibility of assessing candidates abroad in the principal source countries of immigration
- Ask all regulatory bodies without a regulation respecting training and experience recognition to adopt one

Examine the possibility of adopting new rules making it easier to gain the right to practice

Proposed action

- Undertake an examination of the laws, regulations, and practices of regulatory bodies in order to determine if they contain systemic obstacles impeding access to regulated trades and professions by persons trained abroad. This examination must also look at the question of costs and processing times. This exercise should be undertaken by the regulatory bodies themselves, under the supervision of the Office des professions du Québec for professions governed by professional orders or the supervision of the appropriate government departments for other regulated trades and professions.
- Adopt standards for equivalence of supplemental admission terms and conditions in all cases where the rules of regulatory bodies provide for such terms and conditions to achieve the right to practice

**Review of the recommendations of the Task Force
on access to regulated trades and professions**

- Adopt standards for equivalence that enable all regulatory bodies to consider, in an equitable manner, a candidate's relevant work experience

Simplify the permit issuing process

Proposed action

- Encourage regulatory bodies to conclude agreements with foreign regulatory bodies or teaching institutions. The *Groupe de travail* recommends encouraging regulatory bodies to examine the training in certain countries with a view to standardizing the recognition of equivalent credentials as much as possible.
- Amend regulations so that professional orders may issue different classes of permits to facilitate the integration of foreign-trained professionals. In particular, the rules could allow for various limited permits or for permits to be issued upon presentation of certain other permits.

Offer financial aid to immigrants involved in the process of prior learning assessment and recognition

Proposed action

- Approach employers, financial institutions, or private foundations to negotiate agreements under which they would provide some type of financial aid to immigrants involved in the process of prior learning assessment and recognition.

Study the possibility of setting up independent mediation protocols

Proposed action

- Study the possibility of setting up independent mediation entities that would examine complaints regarding prior learning assessment and recognition and play a mediating role with respect to regulatory bodies

Improve the *Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors du Québec*

Proposed action

- Proceed with the revision of the *Évaluation comparative des études effectuées hors du Québec* (*Comparative evaluation for studies done outside Québec*) so that it might better meet the needs of regulatory bodies, employers, and teaching institutions
- Better inform immigrants of the purpose of the *Évaluation comparative*

**DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN OBTAINING THE AUTHORIZATION TO EXERCISE A
REGULATED TRADE OR PROFESSION: ACCESS TO BRIDGE TRAINING**

Provide more opportunities for bridge training

Proposed action

- Ensure that government policy on adult education and continuing education is actively implemented, especially where bridge training is concerned
- Entrust the Ministère de l'Éducation with the task of continuing to review its education regulations and the budgetary rules governing teaching institutions to determine if these contain obstacles to immigrant access to the short-term training stipulated by regulatory bodies
- Ensure recurrent financing for bridge training programs that have proven their worth. A contribution by employers could be envisaged.

- Establish partnerships between regulatory bodies and teaching institutions to ensure the development and sufficient availability of training geared to the Québec work environment. For example, the committees on training of individual professional orders should work in closer cooperation with teaching institutions to ensure that training is more widely available. Regulations governing the committees on training of professional orders could be broadened to include this goal.
- Examine the possibility of using innovative new ways to enable people to upgrade their skills, for instance by taking advantage of the power of information technology. Employers as well as employment insertion organizations, notably those active in cultural communities, could also play a greater role in occupational upgrading for immigrants.
- Establish partnerships with teaching institutions offering distance education in order to design and offer bridge training courses
- To assist with French language acquisition, particularly the vocabulary specific to a trade or profession, online learning tools could be developed for immigrants to use while still abroad. French fluency self-assessment tools could also be made available online.

Promote access to job shadowing, professional immersion, and mentoring

Proposed action

- Implement protocols aimed at promoting access to job shadowing and professional immersion in order to allow those applying for a regulated trade or profession to familiarize themselves with the culture of the Québec workplace
- Study the feasibility of offering those awaiting prior learning assessment and recognition jobs in a workplace related to their profession, but requiring no permit to practice, in order to allow them to familiarize themselves with that workplace

Promote acquisition of the French language and in particular the technical vocabulary related to the profession

Proposed action

- Continue implementation of the measures in the action plan *Common Interests, Shared Values* that deal with francization.
- Promote collaboration between the professional orders and the Office québécois de la langue française in order to ensure that the examinations of this body adequately assess whether candidates possess a knowledge of the French language appropriate to the practice of the profession.

THE CHALLENGES FACING REGULATORY BODIES

Support those with a role to play in prior learning assessment and recognition

Proposed action

- Support regulatory bodies in their efforts to develop competency assessment tools
- Make information and support services available to employers and teaching institutions to help them with the task of assessing competencies acquired outside Québec
- Establish partnerships between the MICC, regulatory bodies, and teaching institutions to promote the pooling of expertise with regard to the assessment of credentials.
- Continue the production and distribution of *Guides de comparaison des études* (guides for the comparison of academic studies), as provided for in the action plan *Shared Values, Common Interests*

**Review of the recommendations of the Task Force
on access to regulated trades and professions**

MONITOR PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION ACTIONS

Monitor actions regarding access to regulated trades and professions

Proposed action

- Gather the information necessary to analyze the success of the MICC's actions and services. The MICC could notably develop tracking indicators to evaluate progress on prior learning assessment and recognition, and publish the results in its annual report.
- Ask regulatory bodies to include in their annual reports, if they do not already do so, a section specifying actions taken toward facilitating the recognition of credentials and skills acquired abroad, as well as the results obtained. These results should specify the number of applications for recognition received as well as the number of equivalences granted and turned down.



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